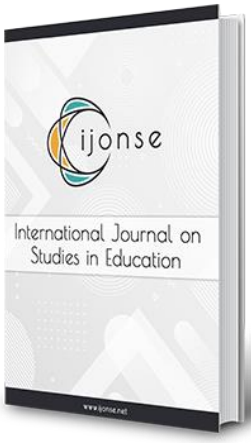

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Enter the School Online Promoter for Online Course Success

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Enter the School Online Promoter for Online Course Success

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Abstract

Often schools are unable to offer a wide curriculum at the Pre-tertiary level (16-18 year olds) because of small cohorts or limited finance to employ the full-time specialist. Some schools, however, have incorporated alternative online instruction instead of conventional direct instruction. However, these online Pre-tertiary learners have to negotiate with working in an unfamiliar virtual working environment, lack of sustained motivation, and the sense of being anonymous and not accountable in any meaningful way. Using data based on 20 interviews with international Pre-tertiary students, school staff, and online provider administrative staff, we propose the Online Partnership Model that has the potential to address these motivational and accountability challenges. In this model, the online provider formally trains and continually works together with an "Online promoter" who is a designated member of the school's staff that is in regular face-to-face contact with the online student. The findings indicate that the motivational role of the Online promoter is welcomed by students, schools, and the online provider as being crucially supportive to student motivational well-being in the virtual environment. With such support, online delivery could well be a viable means of enabling schools to widen their curriculum without having to employ additional staff. For schools, this means that they can offer more specialized subjects (for example, Economics, Psychology, Film Studies, Mandarin) in their curricula where the small number of students does not justify employing a specialist teacher.

Introduction

Distance learning has been available for a long time. From the correspondence courses of the pre-digital era to modern initiatives such as MOOCs (massive open online courses) distance learning has been directed at reaching individuals who for a range of reasons are unable to readily access courses conventionally taught by direct instruction. However, distance learning has not overall enjoyed success. Before the digital age, typically less than one student in 20 starting a distance-taught programme would complete it (Pappano, 2012; Lewin, 2013; Leontyev et al., 2013), whilst the MOOCs of the online era have similarly low completion rates (Coffrin et al., 2012) with Jordan (2015) estimating the figure at as high as three in every 20. These studies did not go beyond comparing the achievement levels of those who finish the course with those who finish the same course by conventional instruction.

Recently because of the Covid pandemic, there has been more interest in online/distance learning at the school level including the pre-tertiary level (16-18 year olds), though prior to the pandemic the amount of attention this area of inquiry has attracted was small compared to such programmes at university and professional training levels. Online/distance learning in schools and elsewhere have often been perceived by school communities as being inferior to conventional instruction and that students would not be suitably motivated to complete their work without having a teacher present (Heppen et al, 2017; Jaggars, 2014).

To this end, the research of Oliver et al. (2014) that focuses on Pamoja Education (the same pre-tertiary provider as the focus of this study) draws attention to schools choosing this form of learning only as a last resort where conventional instruction is not available. Often these pre-tertiary students are preparing for their final secondary qualifications for acceptance onto undergraduate courses. However, some students often want to study university-entrance acceptable subjects that schools may not offer because of school budgets, cohort sizes or inability to recruit a suitably qualified teacher (Ndalichako 2014; Yadav, Gretter, Hambrusch and Sands, 2016). Hence, these students may be offered externally validated courses that are taught through online provision. We suggest that where there is suitable collaboration between online course provider, school, and students, outcomes in online education for these students can rival conventionally delivered instruction within the school at even the achievement outcome level.

At the general secondary level, online courses of such a nature exist and their functioning is widely supported by teachers acting in the capacity of online promoters. Online promoters are designated members of staff in each student's school whose general purpose is to personally support each student in their online study and who have online access to the student's work, course engagement levels, and levels of achievement. However, there is limited understanding of how online promoter roles can support students' engagement in online learning and how schools can best use online promoters synergistically. Drawing on self-determination theory (SDT), this study seeks to consider surface the contributions of online promoters by exploring how their support is operationalized and optimized for successful student outcomes.

Literature Review

Secondary schools whose curriculum includes externally-delivered online programmes of study are increasingly providing their students with an online promoter who regularly interacts with the students (Borup and Stimson, 2019; Borup and Drysdale, 2014). Their work is to support and sustain student online motivation, a role that has "emerged as important adult support to the… online learner" who is typically present in the classroom (Agostinelli, 2019, p.21). The school online promoter can perhaps support the crucial student self-determination that is needed to succeed. SDT suggests that students' intrinsic motivation to succeed is sustained if their basic psychological needs are met (Ryan, Ryan, Di Domenico, and Deci, 2019). These psychological needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In this context, autonomy refers to the sense of having made one's own choice and willingly wishing to study the subject by the online means available, competence is one's perception of having effectively mastered the course content and concepts through online study, and relatedness refers to a sense of being part of that online learning community and feeling connected with others.

Students' intrinsic motivations are thwarted when one or more of these psychological needs are not met. Hence, online promoters possibly might assist students in their autonomy and competence by helping them to acquire and exercise fluency in a range of online study skills, such as developing the self-regulation practices that are vital for working within the flexible structure of the program in order to keep up with the week-to-week work quotas (Harms et al., 2010, Rice 2006, Roblyer et al 2007, and Borup and Stimson, 2019). Previous research suggests that online promoters may be able to support competence and relatedness through supplementing instruction in course content and concepts, particularly when the course content is of a challenging nature (de la Varre, Keane and Irvin 2011, Barbour and Hill 2011, Hendrix and Degner 2016, Oviatt, Graham, Davies and Borup 2018).

Furthermore, the proximity of the online promoters could open the possibility for them to support students to engage regularly with the course: promoting autonomy, competence and relevance, through by means of their presence acting as an extrinsic motivating force (Ayers and Pass 2009, Rice and Carter 2016, Borup and Stimson 2019, Borup, Chambers and Stimson 2019). In addition, online promoters could be significantly more effective in motivating students if they are suitably trained for their tasks: "facilitators are made, not born" (Roblyer 2006, p.34); and hence might improve their capacities to motivate students through the different psychological needs (Hannum et al., 2008, de la Varre, Keane, Inwin, 2011).

Thus, we argue, online promoters may effectively detect student issues and address barriers to learning when and where they occur. Such a setup may be loosely compared to supportive private tutorials by the school, but it cannot be taken too far as the online promoter in some organisations are not expected to have expertise in the student's online subject. Hence, online promoters' work involves liaising directly with the school as well as with the student to facilitate consistent student engagement by keeping up with a range of activities such as the weekly quotas of reading, blogs, class online discussions, and online-teacher-assessed written assignments. It is the nature and relative importance of such company-school collaboration that we explore in this study. Does the person in the online promoter role component reinforce student motivation for prolonged, consistent, and successful online study routines and outcomes? And if so, can this model be more widely used as an effective formula for pre-tertiary and indeed any-age education? To look further at the role of the online promoter in promoting students' engagement, we will use the case study of Pamoja Education, an online provider of pre-tertiary subjects.

About Pamoja and Its Online Promoter

This study explores a case of a pre-tertiary online study framework of the Oxford-based Pamoja Education to further understand the role of the on-site facilitator. Pamoja is a company that has existed since 2009 and has provided whole-subject courses to mainly international 16+ students who are studying the pre-tertiary International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma programme. Pamoja's growing community "currently includes 757 schools, 143 [Pamoja-employed online] teachers, and 4,975 students located around the world" (Pamoja official website, accessed 31st October, 2021). Though mainly within the domain of international students in private schools, the findings from this study should equally address parallel scenarios in the public sector. Pamoja's model involves the collaboration between the online course provider, the school faculty, and the student and it may be a model that other online companies and state education can deliver.

Similar to other providers, Pamoja works directly with schools in their online teaching of whole subject courses; in the case of Pamoja, within the IB (International Baccalaureate) program. Pamoja engages directly with the students through their teachers and administrative staff. Further, the online promoter, which Pamoja refers to as the site-based coordinator (SBC), acts as a go-between or a point of connection between Pamoja and the student's school. Normally, Pamoja's online promoters are designated members of staff in each student's school whose general purpose is to personally support each student in online study and who Pamoja formally trains in how to support students and regularly access their work. The relationships between all of these parties, therefore, represent what we term the online partnership model (OPM, see Figure 1) where both the company (in this case Pamoja) and the school collaborate in promoting and supporting the online studies of the students.

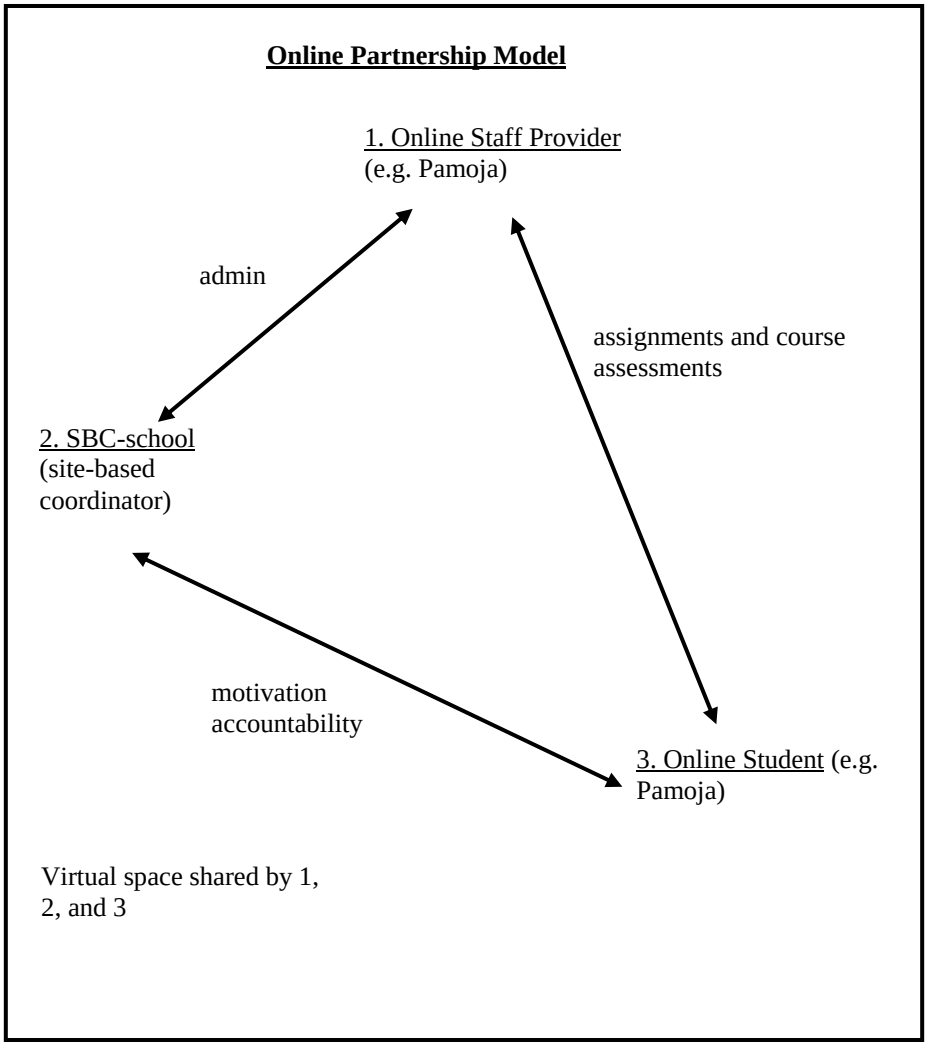

Figure 1. The Online Partnership Model (OPM)

Pamoja defines the role of the online promoter as the person with the specified task of fulfilling the role described as "Schools designate a member of staff to be our first point of contact and to keep track of student progress" (Pamoja Education official website) which requires them to meet with the students regularly to monitor progress and their motivational methods, as well as to encourage and enable them to build up and sustain a positive working relationship with the Pamoja teacher and other students in the course who are scattered throughout the world's

time zones. Hence, online promoters perhaps act as an extrinsic source of motivation for keeping students on track by using face-to-face support. The frequency of meetings will depend on their engagement levels with the course (Pamoja Education official website).

Pamoja's approach to student support is distinctive within virtual learning environments (VLEs) in two ways. Firstly, the role of the online promoter is formally defined and supported through direct training by the company, i.e. Pamoja itself training the SBC.

Secondly, it is likely that students electing to study Pamoja courses may bring a high level of motivation to that setting given that they are in their pre-tertiary years within the International Baccalaureate program, whose outcomes are likely to determine whether they will be admitted to the next stages of their education.

Bearing these points in mind, in this work, we consider what the findings of the Pamoja experience contribute towards optimizing the role of online promoters. What we saw as unknown in the Pamoja case study was understanding the extent that SBCs contribute towards motivating and generally supporting the students.

Method

The research uses an interpretivist approach. To determine the contribution of online promoters in an OPM system, we used a multiple-perspective approach to qualitatively determine how the online promoter was supporting students in their motivation. To determine the degree that SBC involvement encouraged regular engagement by students, we asked students, SBCs and Pamoja staff how far they perceived such interventions as effectively supporting their studies (Hughes, 2012).

To examine the multiple perspectives, individuals who participated in the research were chosen as representing the three bases of the OPM model: students (14 IB first-year Pamoja students), schools (4 online promoters), and the online course provider (2 Pamoja staff from School Services and senior administration). The fourteen Pamoja students were selected from the first-year international student population studying IB Economics online through Pamoja Education at Higher Level. A key reason for choosing Economics was convenience as one of the authors was a teacher of online Economics at Pamoja IB which made those students accessible (Henry, 1990).

In addition, Economics is a specialized subject that many schools do not offer because of the cost of employing an additional specialist teacher. Thus, the findings in this study could have the potential of informing schools about opening the possibility of offering Economics and similarly specialized subjects online at what would almost certainly be a lower cost where just a few students are involved. The possibility that inferences from the convenience sample may only be applied to the sample itself rather than the general population (Bornstein, Jager, and Putnick, 2013) of Pamoja students may be countered by the stratified nature of the sample, designed to represent as wide a range as possible of performance levels and gender. The four online promoters were selected from the Pamoja database, and were currently working with Pamoja IB Economics students in Year 1 of their two-year programme.

Two Pamoja School Services staff that liaised with the SBCs also participated. One was the academic director of Pamoja as a whole (not just Economics) and the other was a Pamoja school services officer in the second year of service. From the Pamoja standpoint, this gave access to the overall view of that provider's entire system as well as the observations of a professional having recently worked through the Pamoja programmes at ground floor level for the first time as Pamoja administrator.

Through the interview prompts, individuals from the different groups were allowed to talk about their realities, experiences, and perceptions. These enabled us to work on co-constructing the realities of what the SBC system contributes to motivationally supporting the online study learning process. These realities were classified under autonomy needs satisfaction, competence needs satisfaction, and relatedness needs satisfaction. We felt that the qualitative and interpretive dimensions of this study should accommodate the detailed, though subjective, semi-structured interviewing-based data. This allowed us to realistically examine the SBCs' motivating contribution to sustained study that could have been the element leading to the outcome that Pamoja's final grade distribution was fundamentally similar to the IB's over the five year period. Hence, looking at these grades, it appears that online study was capable of similar results to the traditional face-to-face classroom. It is important, though, to clarify at the outset that any claim in this study however well-supported by the data would not demonstrate that it is the SBCs' motivation role that is necessarily causing the outcome parity with face-to-face teaching, but such data could well indicate and support the possibility that the SBCs are richly contributing towards it.

All participants were interviewed online using a semi-structured interview schedule as the data-collection and investigative tool, as that would make it possible to drill deeper for further details relevant to the research when required (Cridland et al., 2015; Krauss et al., 2009; Whiting, 2008) whilst at the same time keep the research focused on the objective of the research: the contribution of the SBCs to student motivation. Thus, the interview schedule directed opportunities for respondents to highlight the critical incidents and challenges that they faced in the online study journey so far, and to expound on the details and comment on the effectiveness of the support that they received from their SBCs.

All participants were approached by email, and all interviews were held online, using a Skype program specifically set up for this study. The virtual nature was not due to Covid, but because participants were distributed worldwide. Skype appeared to serve well for its purposes and did not appear to adversely impact the frankness of the responses. A thematic analysis approach was used which followed Braun and Clarke's six-step guide: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and then writing them up. Our approach to the analysis was inductive, whereby we allowed the data to speak for itself in suggesting and prompting the emerging codes and themes that were strongly linked to it (Boyatzis, 1998) with the proviso that what they were informing lay within the focus of our research. This inductive approach was thus data-driven (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

In generating the themes, we prioritized credibility. Our aim was that the data would most accurately represent the information given by those interviewed. This involved using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) where we sought to engage with the data in a reflexive and thoughtful way with a view to building themes

based on individual codes identified in the data. In this study, the first author was responsible for collecting the data from the students and had to recognise his positionality and any ethical conflicts as he was an online teacher of Economics at Pamoja for some of the students in the research. Thus, reflexivity underpinned the thematic analysis requiring the researchers' constant self-awareness of how their own background, position, and possible biases might affect research practice (Ackerly and True, 2010). That in turn would filter out information that does not resonate with the objectives of the research.

Thus, when analysing the results, we kept in mind the dangers of researcher bias stemming from the wish to perhaps demonstrate that the SBC-type figure can be a crucial element in motivating success in online education and who could promote this element as professional practice at pre-tertiary level and beyond. In bearing this in mind, we let the qualitative data speak for itself. We endeavoured to keep a balance within the data between what supported and what did not support our initial conjectures so that they might be representative of the information supplied by the respondents, and finally to allow the reader to form own conclusions on the quality of the interpretations following the trail.

Results

Our findings contrasted with the literature review-based expectations in two ways. Firstly, the literature tended to emphasize the need for students to master how to learn online as being crucial to progress. Yet in this study, no student participants reported difficulties adversely dampening motivation in coping with the mechanics of handling the course platform, in using the course materials, and in making contact with Pamoja teachers and fellow-participants as long as they cooperated. Secondly, only a small student minority reported themselves turning to their SBCs when they were not getting the necessary support from Pamoja or where they had difficulties in projecting themselves suitably in the Pamoja community.

Notwithstanding, the findings from Pamoja appear to indicate SBC motivational support in areas that emerged from the data of this study rather than from the literature in the following ways:

Firstly, the students felt accountable to their SBCs in that students indicated that they sensed that their SBCs had confidence in Pamoja as a course provider and operator. This reassuring and relatedness motivator encouraged them to enter and sustain effort in the program, within the double unknown of a new method of study and a new subject. As one student reported:

> There wasn't Economics at School and I wanted to do Economics… It was the School that told me that there was Pamoja… that does Economics… they told me that there would be someone who would be in charge of me called a site-based coordinator... [Student]

Secondly, the students sensed that their SBCs were not just figureheads, but that they were accountable to them through their regular contact with Pamoja, and that in being accountable to them, they were also effectively operating as a support triangle for them: giving a stronger dimension to the relatedness domain of motivation.

This could be seen as a product of Pamoja's standardized training of the SBCs, and in their regular interactions in not only following up with students but also in cooperative endeavours, such as the school's operating Pamoja end-of-semester examinations. As one student put it:

> For me, I think the pressure you get from a schoolteacher [in the SBC role] at school who's checking up on you, seeing how you're doing, is different from having a distance teacher. [Student]

In addition, the student's sense of accountability was related to their feelings of proximity to the SBCs. For example, on logging into the site, the SBCs were informed, through the dashboard, a picture of the student's current academic and engagement positions, and any lapses in making progress:

> I think I'm more likely to fall behind on schoolwork, because Pamoja has more expectations and activities. In school, you do a whole unit and have a test on it. So there are no real deadlines. Pamoja breaks things down more, so there's less a problem of procrastination [there] than at School… as my SBC sees. [Student]

It is important to stress that not all students interviewed reported high-impact SBC support. Yet the data indicated that those who tended to minimize the importance of the SBC were generally well above average. There were no instances of below-average performers reporting that SBCs were of little importance in supporting their progress. This would indicate SBC support as being less crucial for able students who feel at home in the online environment, but such students were in the minority in this study. As one SBC reported:

> "If the students are the type that are going to love the online experience, then it [SBC support] is less crucial, except for the exam routines. However, there are students who are struggling… I had to work with the kids and the Pamoja teacher to keep things together. The connection is really critical. I think it's the make or the break for kids that would succeed or fall away from the Pamoja-type setting." [SBC]

Finally, levels of SBC involvement tended to affect levels of students' progress: the higher the levels of SBC involvement, the greater levels and higher consistency of student engagement and progress. Both the SBCs and Pamoja staff commented on their observing a positive relationship between the level of SBC motivational activity and the level of student progress within the Pamoja VLE. This served at a minimum of the several times reported "*just that little more pressure not coming from Pamoja*" to proactive support which could well have been of pivotal importance in supporting the success of the program. For whilst acknowledging that there were some students for whom active SBC involvement was of relatively marginal importance, there was full agreement about the existence of a large body of Pamoja students for whom suitable SBC involvement could be the motivating factor towards success optimizing, and whose motivating absence would lead to sub-optimal performance at best and dropping-out at worst, and this was the strongest and most frequently made observation by Pamoja staff, exemplified by the Pamoja staff member with responsibility for all the courses (not just Economics):

> "Overall, the SBCs have had a pivotal role in the student's progress, which in turn is a reflection of the

> degree to which the SBCs have been involved, and that I feel that Pamoja is able to match the face-to-face-taught general IB distribution of grades is because of the online partnership situation. It has to have the school's input to succeed as well as it does". [SBC]

Discussion

This paper set out to surface the role of the online promoter (refer also to SBCs) concerning student engagement using SDT as a lens within an OPM. The findings of this study demonstrated the SBC engagement through the level of perceived presence as well as the level of hands-on support. SBC practice appears to be effective in motivating student engagement and student performance in that VLE environment and community. Their presence and inputs frequently elevate the fully online learning experience to the levels of being tangible and real-life rather than merely distant and virtual, and of being an integral and vital part of the students' pre-university curriculum on par with its other components. This fits in with the studies such as by de la Verre, Keane, and Irwin (2011), Horn and Staker (201), and Singh and Dika (2003), which indicate similar positive patterns even where the online promoter, commonly referred to as the online facilitator, interacts in a much less structured and company-driven standardized manner. Further, the SBCs' position of proximity to the students and the trust that they typically have with their students often predates the current working relationship that enables them to support the motivation of the students in their diverse range of virtual learning environment challenges to the extent that they do (see Borup and Stimson, 2019; Oviatt, Graham, Davies, and Borup, 2018; Rice and Carter, 2016). This study extends previous research by demonstrating that when properly trained and having appropriate data such as having readily accessible and regularly updated indications of student progress, SBCs can be a motivating and supporting force for students in their online studies.

Further, this study indicates that the importance of SBC motivational support is needed in the instances of long-standing student motivational issues within the VLE for which SBCs may have sub-par levels of input. Further, the SBC motivational input is generally not entirely pastoral but can be academic-specialist (see also Hendrix and Degner, 2016 and de la Varre, Keane and Irwin, 2011), even though it maybe mildly discouraged by online providers. Emerging clearly from the data is the overall sense that SBC motivational support is a crucial element that can readily enable schools to widen their choice of specialist subjects through suitably supported online study with successful outcomes that they would otherwise not have the resources to provide.

The optimum level of SBC motivational input varies from student to student, the determination of which falls within the professional judgment of the SBC. Neither our data nor the literature reviewed revealed instances where SBC-type support was sensed as being counterproductive or resented by any party involved. Though it cannot be concluded with certainty that it is the SBC's work that enables Pamoja results at IB to rival direct classroom instruction, the evidence collated and discussed strongly supports the likelihood that it is a substantial and operational factor in this case study.

The OPM model as enhanced by the findings takes the form illustrated in Figure 2.

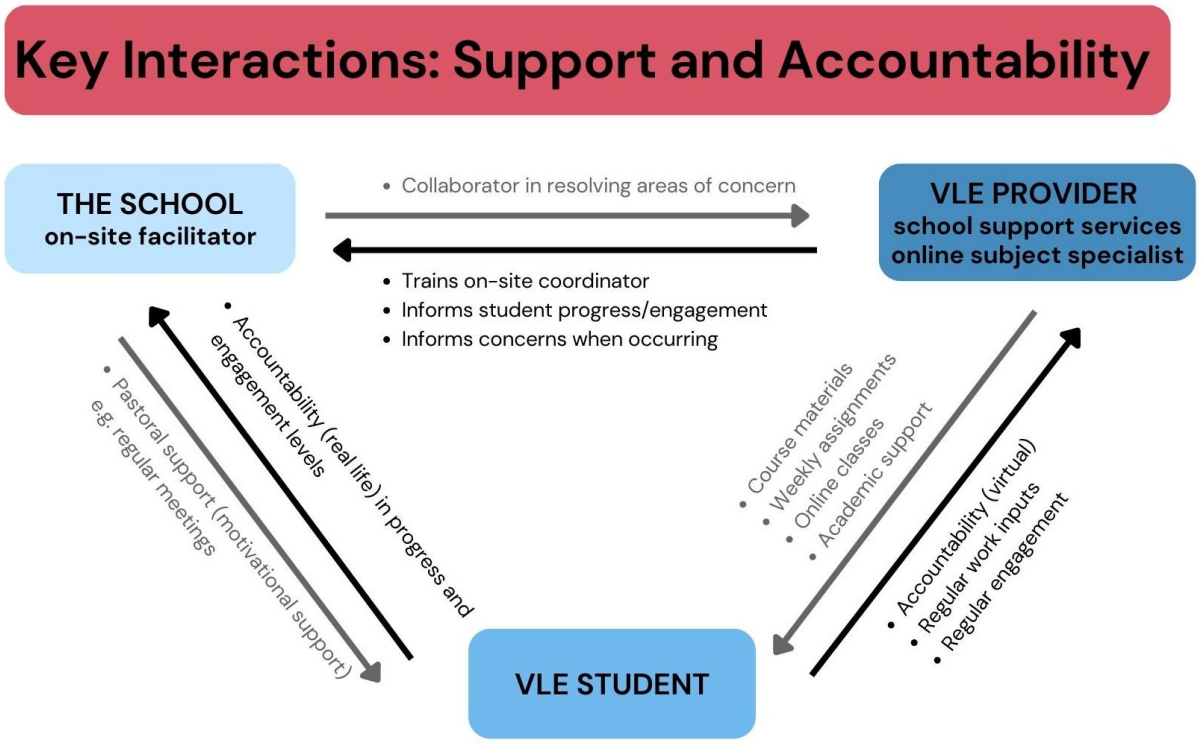

Figure 2. Generalized Diagram of Key Interactions, Support, and Accountability in the Modified OPM Model

Limitations of the Study

There is the possibility that the lack of negative reports on SBCs occurred because the research only contacted students who were active in Pamoja at the time the study was carried out, which was between March and June of their first year. It did not include any students who dropped out of the course before the study took place. In hindsight, interviewing such students might have been of value, as it could have informed on whether such dropouts occurred despite the SBC support, because of the wrong type of SBC support, because of lack of SBC support, or because the student subsequently preferred to learn a different IB subject offered by direct instruction at the school. There would have been considerable practical difficulties in reaching those individuals, as once out of the program, their point of contact would have been removed from Pamoja records accessible to teachers, making researcher contact difficult, if not impossible. However, this does indicate the possibility that SBC involvement considered in this work does not encompass the whole spectrum of student progress or lack of progress within the Pamoja VLE despite the comprehensive nature of the sampling frame designed to achieve that objective, although it could also be argued that the reason for student dropout at such programs is a separate research area of inquiry.

Further, the study might have considered the working and salary conditions of the SBCs in terms of where their duties to their Pamoja students stood about their other duties. No SBC reported or was reported by a student, to be a full-time employee in that job, even in the case of where the school was large, and all students took one course at Pamoja because the school required each student to thus incorporate online skills as part of their curriculum. All SBCs were part of the school faculty in capacities including teacher, librarian, student counsellor, IB coordinator, and in one case school principal, who were supporting VLE students as one of their many duties.

With hindsight, the study could have sought a way of looking at, for example, whether the SBCs worked unpaid, as an item added to their existing duties, or whether they were allocated hours within the timetable for which the school paid them pro-rata. There is thus a possibility that the SBCs that showed minimal interest were poorly paid or even unpaid for their services, and SBCs would not be working to potential unless suitably recompensed. As Pamoja does not directly employ the SBCs, that company is not in a position to negotiate salaries with the schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Notwithstanding the limitations of the study, the overall evidence from the case of Pamoja indicates that schools can use online providers as an effective alternative to direct instruction to fully deliver courses at even pre-university external examination level as long as the provider and school collaborate in supporting the student on the lines summed up in Figure 2. In our study, students were only accepted by the provider where their online promoters, the SBCs, had been successfully pre-trained by the company in their supportive roles in that online community, and are intimately familiar with the detailed nature of the VLE within which the student interacts. This setup at least theoretically secures each student within a support system from the very start.

Likewise, at the more general level, an online provider's platform should be designed so that the online promoter can get the picture of the student's progress at a glance. It should also provide a base for communications between the course provider and the online facilitator. This, as supported by the SBC participants in this study, should put the on-site facilitators in a position to monitor student progress, supporting motivation in needs satisfaction with motivating action where necessary through having access to constantly updated, first-hand information on the student's levels of engagement and progress. As the majority of students participating reported, it is this informed pre-existing source of data that informs the content and objectives of SBC-student meetings.

With that access to detailed information, the online promoter's role should be to advance independent learning: supporting students' autonomy by enabling them to take ownership of their learning and acquiring the habits of effective time-managed studying. As evidenced by the SBCs, professionals in such a role are in a unique position as they are familiar with competing pressures on the students from other direct-instruction-taught components of their day-to-day program, which are experienced differently and elicit different coping strategies with different students. The collective evidence that the students brought in their interview supports this: with the tendency of most, but not all, of the more able students requiring less support in time management than those for whom keeping up with the Pamoja routines week-by-week was a significant problem.

And finally, given such a setup whereby the providers use well-chosen, quality materials to present the course in a suitably structured manner and duly work together with the schools on the OPM model lines, the role of the online promoter opens a window whereby a wide variety of pre-tertiary, and other level courses, could be effectively delivered without the considerable costs of employing specialist teachers. Schools could potentially offer any number of specialist courses beyond staffing budget constraints. That is as long as the crucial, professional-trained, and constantly updated online-promoter personal touch is present.

Practitioner Notes

What is known

- Secondary schools sometimes use external online providers to extend their offered curriculum
- School personnel act as a non-subject specialist school-based coordinator/ online promoter to help students navigate their online learning.
- Students in online studies are probably most successful when they are motivated and have a sense of autonomy.

What This Paper Adds

- School online promoters do not just act as brokers between the online provider and the students, but they have a motivational and pastoral role. The online promoter role is crucial in supporting students' motivational well-being in the virtual environment.
- The online promoters give students a person to be accountable to and a sense of relatedness to the online study, which could perhaps be seen as anonymous.
- A suggested triangular model of how online providers, schools and students should work together to engage students in online learning.

Implications for Practice/Policy

- Use the model to help create better training and expectations of online promoters' motivational role.
- The model provides a framework for setting up future collaborations, terms of reference and contracts between online providers, online promoters and students to promote academic outcomes comparable to traditional direct instruction.

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